Vector Base Map FAQ

Q: What is the URL for the Vector Base Map?

A: The vector base map can be used as a standalone cached map service using: http://tnm2beta/arcgis/rest/services/TNM_Vector_Small/MapServer. Or, the larger scales are served with a dynamic service and can be found using http://tnm2beta/arcgis/rest/services/TNM_Vector_Large/MapServer
For tips on using the service and on changes that are coming please see the Using TNM Services FAQ at http://tnm2beta.cr.usgs.gov/help/documents/FAQs/FAQ%20-%20Using%20TNM%20Services.pdf.

Q: Will this service work as KML or WMS?

A: A: Yes, the WMS urls are http://tnm2beta/arcgis/services/TNM_Vector_Small/MapServer/WMSServer and http://tnm2beta/arcgis/services/TNM_Vector_Large/MapServer/WMSServer, and the addresses for KML would be http://tnm2beta/arcgis/rest/services/TNM_Vector_Small/MapServer/KmlServer and http://tnm2beta/arcgis/rest/services/TNM_Vector_Large/MapServer/KmlServer. For more KML and WMS tips please see the Using TNM Services FAQ at http://tnm2beta.cr.usgs.gov/help/documents/FAQs/FAQ%20-%20Using%20TNM%20Services.pdf.

Q: What sources of data were used to create the vector base map?

A: The data layers for the small scales are National Atlas data, and the large scales are comprised of National Map themes such as the National Hydrography Dataset (NHD) and the Geographic Names dataset (GNIS).

Q: Why doesn't <*insert geographical location or feature here*> look right to me?

A: Due to the various data sources that were pulled together to make this base map, some of the layers, such as roads, are not as complete or up to date as desired. All data are being edited and updated continually, so in the future all areas will hopefully be improving in appearance.

Q: What map projection does the base map service use?

A: The projection used for all base maps and overlay services is Web Mercator. USGS web maps have used the WGS84/"geographic" projection in the past, but Web Mercator was decided on to allow users the greatest level of freedom in mixing these services with other commonly used web maps that exist today, such as Google Maps, Microsoft Bing, etc.

Q: Why doesn't this map include elevation contours?

A: The contours can be found in a separate overlay service, in the Overlays panel on the left, under Base Data Layers.

Q: How were cartographic decisions made at different scales?

A: The cartographers compared popular base maps already in use, as well as USGS' own US Topo base map, which is the 1:24k product standard for WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) when you look to download data or the US Topo product. The team worked from end to end, large scales to small, with expert cartography review provided by the National Geospatial Technical Operations Center (NGTOC), and used 15 landscape-diverse sample areas (i.e. varying density of feature, rural vs. urban, land cover, and territorial differences) for testing the map at each scale along the way.

Q: What is the vintage of the data that make up the vector base map?

A: The most recent cache date for the vector base map tiles can be found in the Help box, using the Help link in the top right corner of the page, under Release.

Q: How often will the vector base map service be updated?

A: The data for the vector base map are updated continually. The tiles are scheduled to be re-created every 30-60 days, and the latest cache date can be found using the Help link, in the Release section.

Q: What geographic areas does the vector base map cover?

A: The vector base map has tiles cached to cover the whole world, but for only oceans, continents and countries, and only at smaller scales. The larger scales have detailed data for the conterminous U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Territorial Islands such as Guam and the Northern Marianas.

Q: What parameters were used for caching the base map?

A: The vector base map was cached in PNG32 tiles, 256x256 pixels in size, 96 DPI, at global scales down through 1:18,056. The tile cache is made up of over 13 million tiles, and takes 4-6 weeks to regenerate. The 1:9,028 scale is not cached but served dynamically, and is scheduled to be added by the end of the beta period.